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# EVICTED OFF THE STREETS: BOX CITY

In the pouring rain, City officials started clearing a homeless encampment at 7am on January 10. Named Box City for its wooden boxes that sheltered a community made up of 30 to 40 homeless people, including a tight-knit group of Tagalog speaking Filipinos, the encampment had been around since September of last year and was located along the freeway on 7th street and Irwin.

Some boxes that were cleared by the Department of Public Works had been identified as abandoned by the residents of the encampment; others people rushed to save by dragging across to the other side of the street. Other shelter structures that the residents wanted to claim have been stored away by the City at Pier 50, a practice that typically is not employed when clearing encampments. This had been negotiated by the Saint Francis Homelessness Challenge, which has been working with the encamp-

ment to improve livability in the streets, including raising money to install and consistently service a Porta Potty.

As the residents hurried to move their possessions and shelter across the street, Box City residents were offered a 30 night stay at the mission Navigation Center, a low barrier shelter for homeless people. However, the problem will remain: Thirty days at a shelter, even with case management, will not—and has not—led to housing.

The Department of Homelessness argues that the thirty days is longer than that. It's meant to be a triage center, where people's needs will be assessed and adequate services will follow.

However, the reality for most is that the Navigation Centers are only another temporary shelter stay. While it had previously been an exit into housing, the exit is now often just to another shelter.

The Box City residents' time at the Nav-



igation Center is almost up, but many of them will be back on the streets. The majority of residents will be moving out on the sixth or seventh of February, as permanent supportive housing would have required

being on the street for 13 years or more, having certain health conditions, or being a veteran, among other eligibility criteria.

The adult shelter waitlist has consis-

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# MAYOR CUTS HOUSING SUBSIDIES PUTTING HUNDREDS AT RISK

CRYSTAL YU

Mayor Lee recently cut funding for two new Board-funded housing subsidies, affecting 175 households across the city. The funding would have provided critical rental assistance for seniors, families, and people with disabilities.

These funds were backed by the Board of Supervisors and totaled \$2.5 million—125 subsidies worth \$1.5 million for seniors and the disabled, and another 50 subsidies worth \$1 million for families with children.

"We have to invest the resources to keep people in San Francisco," says Brian Basinger, Director of the AIDS Housing Alliance and Q Foundation, a nonprofit organization that works to prevent homelessness for the LGBTQ and HIV communities. "The repercussions of displacement are greater."

The two housing subsidies were part of several homeless initiatives the Mayor had funded in the summer of 2016. The plan was to support the initiatives with anticipated revenue from Proposition K, a local sales tax increase on the November 2016 ballot, which would have provided \$50 million for homeless services. When Proposition K did not pass, the Mayor defunded the housing assistance programs citing bud-



get cutbacks.

Efforts are already underway to persuade the Board to restore funding. "It is cheaper to keep people in the homes they already have than to allow them to get evicted," says Basinger. "The cost of displacement is just too high."

The budget cuts will affect a large majority of San Francisco's homeless population. According to the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes the

Street Sheet, at least 4,400 homeless San Franciscans have a disabling health condition. Over 3,300 are homeless children living in in-tact families, and at least 1,700 are older adults living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, the Human Services Agency Planning Division states that at least 4,600 homeless seniors identify as LGBT and need access to permanent rental assistance to remain in their homes.

"We need to make sure that we are increasing investments across the board into all kinds of communities for whom displacement puts them at greater risk," Basinger says. "If [people] get displaced from San Francisco, they wind up in less tolerant communities." Often, these people are turned away for critical health services they need.

Basinger urges concerned citizens to call their Board representatives. "Right now, the focus is on the Board of Supervisors to restore the funding," he says. "We're asking residents to contact their Supervisor and ask for their support to replace the funding for these 175 subsidies."

"We would like to have unanimous support from the Board because we want to make sure that the Mayor spends the money. A broad base of support for this effort will influence his approach."

So far, the community has support from Sandra Lee Fewer from District 1, Aaron Peskin from District 3, Jane Kim from District 6, Norman Yee from District 7, Hillary Ronen from District 9 and Ahsha Safai from District 11. Community members are in discussions with the remaining six Supervisors. ■



# WHERE NEW SUPERVISORS STAND ON HOMELESSNESS

TJ JOHNSTON

Just like the ones before, the latest class of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors will have to tangle with the city's homelessness crisis. And the four newest supervisors could play a key role.

The board welcomed them to City Hall on January 9. Three of the them—Sandra Lee Fewer, Hillary Ronen and Ahsha Safai—were elected last November to replace termed-out supervisors. The fourth, Jeff Sheehy, was appointed to fill a vacant seat after its previous occupant was elected to the State Senate.

Media have already pointed out that the 2017 board is the first in 22 years with a majority of female members. Others observed the shift in power balance between the board's progressive wing and the moderate one. Also, speculation abounds on how strongly the board—and the City and County of San Francisco as a whole—will defend against Trump administration edicts. In a show of unity, the board vowed to resist any federal attempts of undermining San Francisco values.

In the meantime, the supervisors also have the power to appropriate funds from multiple City departments in the municipal budget. In July, they must cut \$150 million because the Proposition K sales tax factored in last year failed to pass with local voters in the election. About \$69 million for homeless families expected from the hotel tax has also been lost with the defeat of Proposition S.

That means the 11-member body must evaluate where in the almost \$10 billion budget—or in revenue streams outside the budget—could homeless services get funding. Just as important is how much will be allotted.

That discretion is afforded to San Francisco's elected officials, and the 2016 election might indicate what homeless people and their housed allies could expect in the new year. The three elected freshmen to the board weighed in on the campaign trail on how to house roofless residents.

Drawing upon interviews with supervisors and their staff, as well as campaign materials and press accounts, the Street Sheet examined how they would likely approach homelessness.



## D9: HILLARY RONEN

Prior to her election, Hillary Ronen was chief of staff for her predecessor, David Campos. Before that, she was an immigration rights attorney. Now, as supervisor for District 9, Ronen represents an area including the Mission District. The neigh-

borhood—particularly, the Division Street area—has become a locus for encampment sweeps. The vicinity of 16th and Mission streets is the site of the City's low-threshold shelters known as Navigation Centers, as well as the future home of Fraternité de Notre Dame's soup kitchen (both of which Ronen vigorously supported).

At a neighborhood meeting three weeks before she took office, Ronen addressed merchants' concerns about refuse in the area by saying that she will ask the Department of Public Works to add garbage cans on Mission Street and other commercial corridors. If DPW won't do it, she said, Ronen will introduce legislation requiring the department to do so.

"We can't be complaining about the trash on the streets if we don't have any trash cans," she told the Street Sheet. "It's just ridiculous."

Ronen supported Props K and S, but she said that she learned a lesson on civic budgeting.

"I'm never passing a budget predicated on ballot measures," she said. "We're going to look for ways to reallocate within the budget so that it's fully funded. We're going to look for funding not just for homeless services, but for affordable housing."

While campaigning, Ronen said that the City could bolster mental health services and explore more Navigation Centers and small-scale shelters as options.

But Ronen didn't provide any specifics where in the budget City monies could be moved around for these programs.

"Nothing is ever simple with the budget," she said. "The Board of Supervisors doesn't have access to the ins and outs of it."



## D1: SANDRA LEE FEWER

Sandra Lee Fewer ran for the District 1 seat on a platform of creating affordable housing. The former school board member and self-identified progressive advocated for using as many tools available in its box to combat homelessness.

"There is no 'one size fits all' approach to homelessness," she said on her campaign website. "We need a diverse range of solutions to address the needs of diverse homeless populations."

Fewer, whose constituency covers the Richmond District, promised to build new Navigation Centers in appropriate locations, as well as a new emergency shelter for families. She also pledged to disperse Homeless Outreach Teams from the Department of Public Health in each supervisorial district. Fewer said she would expand permanent supportive housing, while supporting mental health and substance abuse programs.

Nick Pagoulatos, a legislative aide in Fewer's office, cited the lack of affordable housing is directly related to homelessness. In her campaign, Fewer said that she would identify three sites for affordable housing, including any surplus public land.

As far as replenishing homeless funding lost from the defeat of Props K and S, Pagoulatos said that Fewer will examine unused salary savings to fill the gap. John Avalos originally proposed this legislative fix before he termed out of office. Now, Fewer is taking the lead on the proposal, Pagoulatos said.

Avalos said that \$38 million could be appropriated, but Pagoulatos said the Controller's Office might find a different amount.

"We're working with the Controller's office to make sure the figures are correct and the money is there," he said, adding that the Controller periodically gives the board year-to-date numbers and will get assistance from the Budget and Legislative Analyst. "We want to make sure that we get it right and that it's politically viable."

Fewer is also looking at other potential solutions with a federal budget select committee, Pagoulatos said.



## D11: AHSHA SAFAI

Ahsha Safai's District 11 isn't thought of as a hotbed of homelessness. In fact, according to a City Controller's report, the SF Homeless Outreach team visited the district encompassing the Excelsior District and the Oceanview-Merced Heights-Ingle-side neighborhoods just once last March.

Safai, a moderate, won in his second bid for the D11 seat, succeeding termed-out progressive stalwart John Avalos. His victory tilted the board in the moderates' favor, giving them—and Mayor Ed Lee—a critical sixth vote. Previously, he worked at the SF Housing Authority under Willie Brown and eventually on the commission in charge of SFHA. Safai and his fellow commissioners were fired after they were criticized by the City's Budget and Legislative Analyst for its ineffectiveness.

In 2016, Safai won endorsements from Realtor and landlord groups, such as the Building Owners and Management Association and the SF Apartment Association.

When seeking the endorsement of the District 11 Democratic Club, he wrote to the club that he favored "aggressively addressing homelessness." He said that he approved of Prop. K, stating "we need new sources for homeless and transportation that doesn't take from existing revenue sources."

However, he took no position on Prop. S, which would have provided funding for

homeless services and the arts, and Prop. Q, the homeless tent ban that narrowly won. He did favor the unsuccessful Prop. R, which would have created neighborhood police units assigned to enforce so-called "quality of life" offenses on homeless people.

Furthermore, Safai told the club that the City should dedicate all available monetary and land resources in providing homeless people with clean and safe transitional housing. He also suggested that the City collaborate with for-profit businesses to create miniature housing units and increase the number of respite beds.

"We must investigate creating tiny homes, using public land and securing money from the private sector to create this housing," he said. "We must also prioritize creating new med-psych beds in hospitals and clinics around the city to transition people away from self-medicating to proper psychiatric care."



## D8: JEFF SHEEHY

Jeff Sheehy, whom Mayor Ed Lee appointed last month, is the latest to join the board as District 8's supervisor. A resident of the Glen Park neighborhood, he also represents the Castro, a mecca for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community—and a refuge for unhoused youth and homeless LGBT residents.

Once president of the progressive Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club during the '90s, Sheehy supported then-D8 Supervisor Scott Wiener's state senate campaign. Now, he sits in Wiener's former seat with the board's moderate bloc as an expected ally of Lee. Until his appointment to the board, he was a communications director for the UC San Francisco AIDS Research Institute. He has also been a longtime HIV/AIDS activist.

In his first meeting as a supervisor on January 10, he requested a hearing on what impact expected cuts in federal funding would have on vulnerable populations in San Francisco, including undocumented immigrants, LGBT people and homeless people. As of press time, that hearing has yet to be scheduled.

Yet Sheehy recently told the San Francisco Chronicle that his district doesn't have a place where social services—particularly those that could be accessed through a Navigation Center—could be provided.

"If you want to have a Navigation Center, there should be services nearby, and you should have neighborhood services," he said. "I don't see a site in District 8 where that would be possible." ■



# COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

## WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

### HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP

Every Tuesday at noon

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone!

### HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP

Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join!

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : [www.cohsf.org](http://www.cohsf.org)

## STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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# LOWERING THE COUNT: NEW SHELTER REQUIREMENTS MEAN LESS HOPE FOR SAN FRANCISCO'S HOMELESS FAMILIES

DAVID KRAUSE

In an effort to decrease the number of homeless families waiting for shelter in San Francisco, city officials have proposed to tighten some of the criteria for entry into homeless family shelters. Instead of speeding up the current seven-month-wait by moving more families into housing, the city is speeding up the wait for some by kicking others off the list entirely. A backward attempt to lower the homeless count by leaving some families ineligible for shelter entry.

Current criteria for entry into shelter includes completion of a nine-page document, proof of homelessness, birth certificates, a weekly phone call into the shelter hotline, registration in public benefits, a statement stating that the family is not currently living in any other person's house and a list of other varying degree-of-difficulty tasks.

These proposed requirements would eliminate the proof of homelessness and registration in benefits, but would make many families who are doubled up, or those staying temporarily out of town ineligible for shelter. It may not sound like a huge deal to a family not looking for shelter, but to the parents and children who are experiencing the trauma of homelessness firsthand, each additional task means a longer time without a home, which in turn means more trauma for the family, all of which means that the city's shelter system that is supposed to put families first — San Francisco is, by definition, a sanctuary city — is in fact serving to cleanse the city of the poor and homeless, defeating the human condition that is supposed to be the soul of these seven-by-seven miles: the willingness to treat others with empathy and kindness.

Why are the requirements changing? The requirements are changing because city officials have announced a new plan to eliminate all homeless families in San Francisco within the next three years, a \$30 million dollar effort, and therefore the numbers have to start dropping, any means possible, including proposing a new requirement that breaks federal law. This proposed requirement would force homeless families temporarily staying elsewhere in the Bay to register their child(ren) in San Francisco's Unified School District, violating the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH) of 2009 — specifically the education subtitle of the

## BOX CITY

FROM PAGE 1

tently been over 900 people long. Encampments sweeps by the City continue to be ineffective in solving homelessness, instead displacing people without providing any real alternatives.

"Everyone on the front line from the SF Homeless Outreach Team to SFPD to the Department of Public Works knows this is a messed up situation," says Kelley Cutler, a human rights organizer at the Coalition on Homelessness. "The clearing of an en-



McKinney-Vento Act. According to the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless children and youth have the right to continue their education in their "school of origin" - e.g., the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which they were last enrolled. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(A).

Jennifer Friedenbach, director of the Coalition on Homelessness, the organization that publishes Street Sheet, wrote that mobility between school districts is common among homeless children and youth, which is why the McKinney-Vento Act establishes the right of students to remain in their school of origin, regardless of school district boundaries, as they move. Children who change schools fare worse on academic assessments, are more likely to repeat a grade or to drop out and have their emotional and social well-being compromised. One study found that youth aged 11 to 17 were twice as likely to attempt suicide if their families moved three or more times compared to those who had never moved.

The proposed requirements also lack cultural competency, and the disclosure of personal information will be a barrier, especially for people who are undocumented or do not want to disclose certain information that they believe will risk their losing their children. In a case example, one family was on list for several months. The mother of the family reported that she was staying with her mother and other folks, but after a period of time, she returned to Connecting Point and admitted she was living in her car with her children for 9 months and was too scared to admit it.

Furthermore, a requirement for entry states that homeless families cannot

campment is a traumatizing experience for the people living there."

Despite the improvements of the treatment of homeless encampments, which now provide encampments with a two-week eviction notice, the encampment clearings still do not follow the U.S. Interagency's Council on Homelessness guidelines: The bottom line is there needs to be permanent housing or transitional housing that leads to permanent housing in order for encampments to be cleared. ■

be placed on long-term shelter waitlists if they are living in another person's household and do not state they are unsafe. Homeless families often stay in other people's households not because they are safe or healthy but because they don't want to put their children on the street. A recent UCSF study of 108 homeless families on the Connecting Point waitlist found that 28 percent were forced to trade sex for a place to stay. This requirement is another example of a hurdle put up by city officials that homeless families must jump over for no other apparent reason than to make them jump.

These families are tired. Soon they may have no other choice but to leave the city. The homeless count may go down. City officials may be able to claim victory. But over 600 homeless families still live here. This is their home, too. Long-term shelter is a basic human right. They have children for children's sake. No one deserves to be stuck in this position. ■

## WRITING PROMPT

With the recent rainstorm hitting the Bay Area, think about all the ways water surrounds/consumes us. Have you ever felt like you were drowning in something other than water? Maybe a difficult relationship? Debt? The upcoming presidential inauguration? Write a poem to something or someone who floods you.

GHOSTLINE (OPTIONAL): YOU  
THOUGHT YOU COULD DROWN ME  
WHEN... WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW  
WAS...

This writing prompt is brought to you by **GHOSTLINES**. [WWW.GHOSTLINESCOLLECTIVE.TUMBLR.COM](http://WWW.GHOSTLINESCOLLECTIVE.TUMBLR.COM)

IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE YOUR WRITING WITH THE STREET SHEET, YOU CAN E-MAIL [STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG](mailto:STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG) OR MAIL TO STREET SHEET 468 TURK ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102.





# RECLAIMING MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY: CITYWIDE HOMELESS PEOPLE’S POPULAR ASSEMBLY

On January 17, the Coalition On Homelessness, in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the 48th anniversary of the Poor People’s Campaign and Resurrection City, the Coalition On Homelessness, in conjunction with the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), along with the Anti-Police Terror Project’s 120 hours of actions to Reclaim MLK Day and other community partners, held a Citywide Homeless People’s Popular Assembly at the Civic Center Plaza, across the street from San Francisco City Hall.

In 2016, The Coalition on Homelessness launched a series of Homeless People’s Popular Assemblies in encampments around the city in order to involved the homeless community in the work we do. These Homeless People’s Popular Assemblies were led by solely homeless or formerly homeless people. These efforts led to leadership development, encampment sweep monitoring and a homeless-led petition drive with over 500 homeless signatures calling for dignity and human rights of encampment residents.

The day’s activities included providing a platform for homeless folks to expressed their views and offered solutions regarding San Francisco’s current homelessness crisis. Food was served by Glide church, the nuns from Fraternité de Notre Dame and Simply Sandwiches. Doctors from the Do No Harm movement were also on hand offering high blood pressure monitoring and other medical services. Rapper and Frisco Five member Equipto entertained the crowd with two inspiring raps. Afterward, members of the homeless community proceeded with a delegation to City Hall to deliver over 800 online and handwritten, homeless-generated signatures to S.F. supervisors and the mayor, calling for the dignity and human rights of those in encampments be recognized by the city of San Francisco.

The Coalition On Homelessness thanks all those who contributed to this event and helped make it a successful and empowering day. ■

## POOR PEOPLE’S CAMPAIGN

WASHINGTON, D.C., SPRING 1968

The poor people of America will demand decent jobs and income in massive demonstrations in our nation’s capital, Washington, D.C., this spring.

The Poor People’s Campaign, starting in April, is being organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with the support and participation of many local groups and individuals.

**WHO WILL BE IN THE POOR PEOPLE’S CAMPAIGN?**  
At the start, several thousand poor people will go to Washington. We will be young and old, jobless fathers, welfare mothers, farmers and laborers. We are Negroes, American Indians, Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, poor white people.

**WHERE DO THESE POOR PEOPLE LIVE?**  
All across the nation. SCLC is recruiting poor people in 10 big cities and five Southern states. Poor people in all other communities and cities are also invited to join the Campaign.

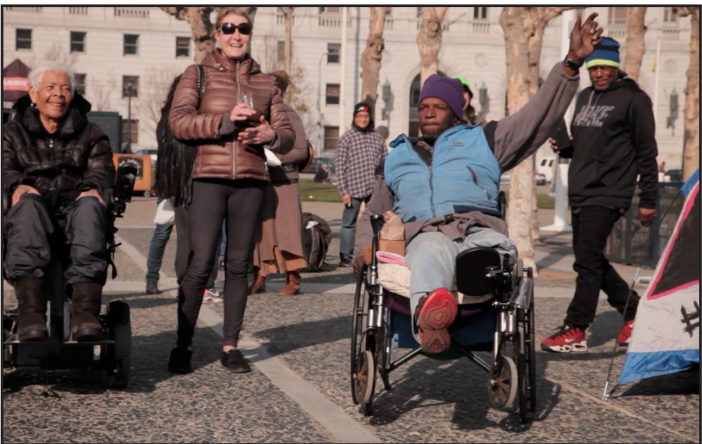
**DO YOU HAVE TO BE POOR TO BE IN THIS CAMPAIGN?**  
No. Most persons at the start of the Campaign in Washington will be poor, but other people from all walks of life must be prepared to take their place in the lines of this campaign.

**WHY ARE WE GOING TO WASHINGTON?**  
Washington is the center of government power, and the national government has the money and resources to end poverty and fight racism. But that government has failed to do this. Therefore the Poor People’s Campaign will demand government reforms.

**WHAT WILL THE POOR PEOPLE’S CAMPAIGN DO IN WASHINGTON?**  
We will build powerful nonviolent demonstrations on the issues of jobs, income, welfare, health, housing, education, human rights. These massive demonstrations will be aimed at government centers of power, and they will be expanded if necessary. We must make the government face up to the fact of poverty and racism. In order to carry out our demonstrations, we will not reveal to the government in advance exactly what we plan to do and where we will demonstrate.

**WHAT WILL WE DEMAND?**  
We will present to the government a list of definite demands involving jobs, income, and a decent life for all poor people so that they will control their own destiny. This will cost billions of dollars, but the richest nation of all time can afford to spend this money if America is to avoid social disaster.

**WHAT IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOTHING?**  
We will stay until the government responds, building up the pressure for action by calling for thousands upon thousands of people, rich and poor, to come to Washington or stand up and be counted in demonstrations in their home communities.



“I THINK YOU’VE GOT TO HAVE A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ENTIRE SOCIETY, A REVOLUTION OF VALUES.”  
- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



ALL “RECLAIM MLK” PHOTOS BY NOEMI SERFATY.



# INTERFAITH GROUPS MEMORIALIZE HOMELESS DEAD

VLAD K.

It was a varied group of about 100 people with flickering candles who gathered in front of City Hall on December 21, the first night of winter. Several Catholic monks, rabbis, Buddhist teachers, Protestant ministers and Sufi murshids formed a semicircle. Others were social workers, health professionals, spiritual guides, and friends from the streets, with close personal or professional relationships with those who had passed away. United by belief in the sacredness of human life, these San Franciscans of every age and every walk of life came to pay respect to those they had never met, to those tormented souls world who were treated as unwanted children by an unfriendly world while they were still alive, who didn't get any grain of sand with their name on it, until after they died.

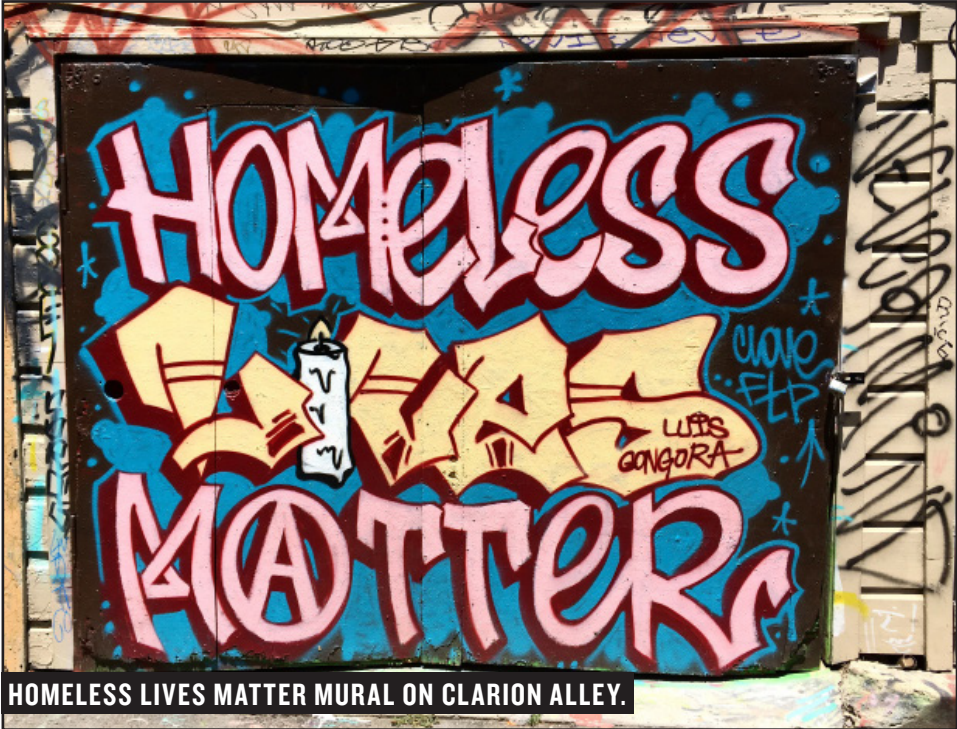
This was the Interfaith Memorial Service for Our Homeless Dead.

The memorial service is an annual event commemorating the lives of those who died either homeless or in marginal housing situations. The San Francisco Interfaith Council and the SF Night Ministry conducted the service as part of a wider night of remembrance that the National Coalition for the Homeless organized.

One after another, priests of the different traditions offered words of wisdom and prayers in various sacred languages, and read out the names of the dead, almost 200 of them, each separated by the solemn sound of a gong.

Why do we need to honor all those

homeless people who die leaving so many legacies but without any traces of being gone? Our rational mind is helpless in the face of eternity. It cannot answer our questions why and how even from the height of such a tiny period of time as billion a years from now. All that we love and hate, imagine and believe, is deeply grounded in little periods of time, a maximum just one billion years from now.



Our rational minds can't help us understand the mystery of life. Our minds are too limited in time and space to know we have come here and where we will go. We do not know what is infinity in the outside world, but we can feel infinity inside. It is the unique universe that leaves our planet together with departing soul. Our minds are helpless in front of eterni-

ty, so having no other choice, we turn to our hearts for the answers. Every religion and faith teaches us that every human life is equally sacred, and souls of homeless people died on the streets of San Francisco are not any less precious than the souls of public figures, such as Muhammed Ali, David Bowie, Prince or Eli Wiesel. Listening to the prayers and the words of wisdom, I felt respect in the voice of my heart and

the ideas of freedom.

Flashback to 10 years ago: The first time I faced the problem of dying homeless people during my internship at the Spiritual Care Department in Saint Francis Memorial Hospital. We tried to locate relatives or closed ones of Leicester Grey—an African American homeless man who slept somewhere under Bay Bridge. His only son was in prison, so this contact was

closed. Among scanty pieces of information we had about Mr. Grey was the witness, the person who brought him to the hospital and identified himself as a friend of a friend. This person said that Mr. Grey spent most of his days playing with kids on the playground and was “the quietest person ever lived.”

The worldly possessions of Mr. Grey consisted of a duffle bag with clothing and a small case with documents. We turned to this case to continue our search for relatives. After we opened the case we found it being full of thank-you letters from rescued African children whom Mr. Grey sent regular donations for vital medications from his general assistance check of approximately \$400.

But besides that, we found several dozen photos of the kids with thank you letters. As we discovered, Mr. Grey who lived on \$400, found an opportunity to donate money on a monthly basis to provide healthcare for the African children and many of them were saved with his help. If God will forgive my irony here, I can mention that Leicester Grey deserved almost the same honor as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whose body was dumped into community disposal pit. In San Francisco, the unclaimed bodies are cremated, and then the ashes are scattered into the bay.

Some people believe that death is similar to life—those who lived an honorable life deserve an honorable death. Mr. Grey, according to his friend, never did any harm to anybody. And who would dare to compare kindness of his good actions to those of any other housed person? ■

# SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS, ADVOCACY GROUPS SUGGEST IMPROVEMENTS TO SYSTEM

GIANNI JONES

Homelessness continues to be a pervasive social contemporary problem within the San Francisco Bay Area. Advocacy organizations and service providers of homeless people seek to implement policies that minimize barriers that homeless families, youth, and adults are facing. In fact, focus groups consisting of members of the homeless population and/or front line service providers in 12 different homeless service providers and advocacy organization took place.. The survey outcomes revealed interesting findings of barriers within the homeless system. These barriers ranged from systemic capacities shortcomings, family eligibility problems, to shelter program rules that contribute to the difficulties this population experiences. Furthermore, here are some recommendations for creating a system that fosters successful exits for individuals, families, and adults experiencing homelessness.

## SYSTEM CAPACITY

System expansion of shelters, navigation centers, full-service family emergency shelters, drop-in services, improvement of the youth access to 24-hour care and residential treatment are needed. In addition, access to behavioral health services which have proven to be beneficial to the homeless population once housed.

The findings from the focus group indicated a need for access to adequate living

conditions, increase in space to address hygienic needs and more housing permitted within the shelter. By increasing housing options for the homeless population, it would help to resolve the homeless crisis in San Francisco and the greater Bay Area.

Many families are facing numerous barriers in accessing shelter, which include stricter criteria in obtaining shelter, long waiting lists and an intricate system not designed to address their needs. There are several recommendations to resolve this problem such as reducing the waiting list through diversion, prioritizing families on the waiting list, simplifying intake criteria, eliminating residency requirements for shelters, accommodating the reunification process, waiving ID requirements for entering shelters, eliminating requirements of proof of homelessness status, ending weekly phone requirements, and enactment of continuous access to Connecting Point Services.

## SHELTER STAYS

Countless families and individuals are faced with “forced timeouts,” in the homeless system. Shelter stays are currently plagued with instability and lack of linkage to permanent housing. By allowing open access to the shelter waiting list, supporting a program's ability to set their own length of stay, shelter to housing placement and eliminating the “seven-day out” rule at agencies such as Hamilton would help to create stabil-

ity that these individuals and families need.

## SINGLE ADULT SHELTER AND NAVIGATION CENTER ELIGIBILITY

Findings from the focus group suggested the need to solidify equal access to shelters, rectify the one night bed shelter system, allow drop-in's to shelters with availability, eliminate requirements for biometric imaging and fortify an equal access to navigation center.

## SHELTER ADVOCATES

It's recommended that like other shelters, in navigation centers advocates assist clients facing homelessness with the due process and that proper grievance procedures are followed once someone loses access to navigation centers. In addition, fair treatment of residents no longer able to stay in shelters must be a systemic norm. It's essential to provide support to shelter residents that would like to appeal decisions made about their housing.

## HOUSING ACCESS

Each human has a right to adequate housing and there should be access to services to all of those in need, improved process of housing people experiencing homelessness, coordinated assessment for housing, considered all risk factors to becoming homeless, decriminalization of homeless people, feedback from case managers and implementing a centralized application process. Overall, these are a few recommendations that

would help to improve the homeless system and fortify success for this population.

## SHELTER PROGRAM RULES AND BARRIERS

Many participants in the focus group presented themes relating to the importance of programs creating nurturing environments for people experiencing homelessness. Other recommendations for changes included loosening curfew hours, improving access to childcare, treating clients with dignity, ensuring cleanliness of shelters, addressing family needs, and continued access to trained staff with knowledge of mental health, women, trauma, and cultural issues..

## HOUSING PROGRAM RULES AND BARRIERS

Many rules imposed by housing programs were considered barriers by the participants in the focus group. Prevalent themes of the inability to manage paperwork, maintaining access to benefits were problematic and significant. It would be more beneficial to this population to halt the process of evicting people no longer receiving benefits, eliminate non-payment of rent eviction, and allow changes to be made within a household without access to housing being compromised.

The information obtained is valuable in implementing policies and changes that adhere to the needs of the populations that they serves. It's through collaboration and the sharing of experiences that will help to end homelessness in San Francisco. ■



# REMEMBERING EDDIE “TENNESSEE” TATE

ROBERT GUMPERT

December 20th, I was in the Phoenix airport waiting on a flight home to Omaha, when I came across an article announcing the murder a homeless couple in San Francisco’s Mission District. They were shot and killed near an encampment on the corner of 16th and Shotwell streets. The victims, the paper said, were twenty-seven-year-old Lindsay McCollum and fifty-one-year-old Eddie Tate. I recognized Tate’s name. I had met him while photographing inmates at “Old Bruno,” the oldest of San Francisco’s jail faculties. The jail closed in August of 2006 in part because Tate and six other prisoners filed a lawsuit charging overcrowding and a physical structure showing all of it’s 70 years, a place not fit to live or work in.

I saw Eddie once more in 2011 when was locked up in the new SF jail in San Bruno and this time recorded a few of the stories he told me.

that ... lived so far up in the hills of Tennessee that I hardly ever got to go to school, and then when I went to school I was such a pain and everything that I’d make a straight F and they would pass me just to get rid of me. What education I got, I got through the prison system.” Tate moved to San Francisco after the 1989 earthquake, and since that time has gone by the nickname Tennessee. When I met him at Old Bruno, he was using the time in jail to get his high school diploma. Tate had been clean for sixteen months, for the first time in as long as he could remember. He was a hyperactive infant and his dad put alcohol in his bottle to “knock me out, to get me to go to sleep... and I’ve been on some substance or another my entire life.”

As for doing time, he summed up his strategy by saying: “I have to be crazy to live the life that I live. I don’t want no misunderstanding, if you push I will get real crazy on you.” Speaking of the 51-50 (police

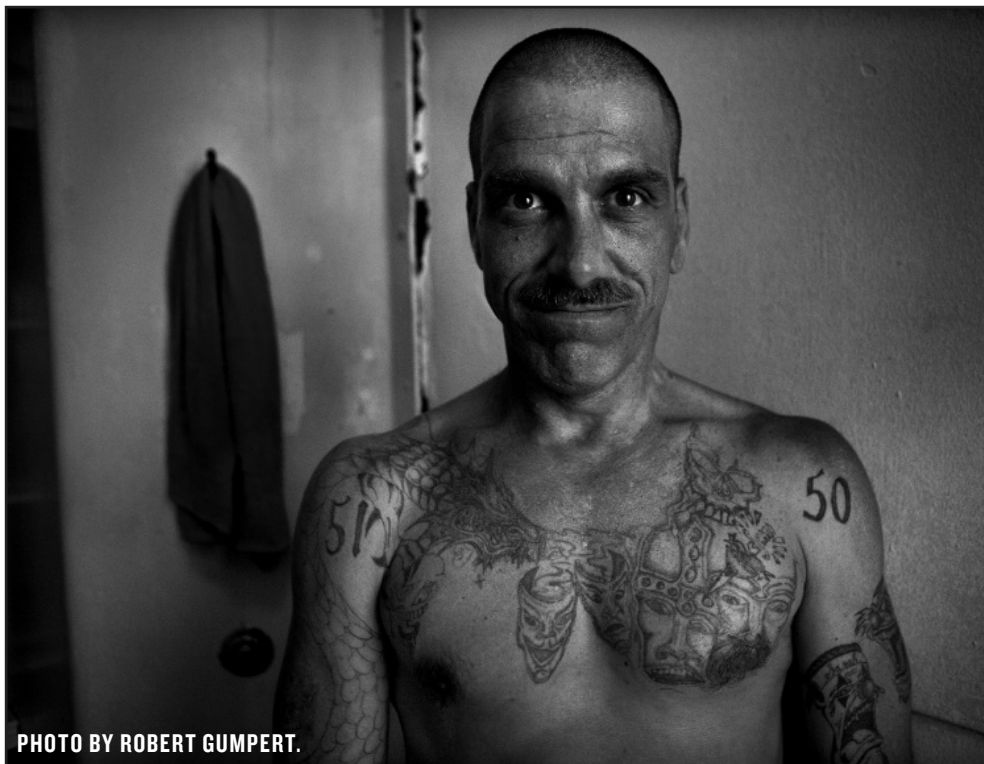


PHOTO BY ROBERT GUMPERT.

was tired of doing time, he was finished with the drugs and the coming to jail. I did not see him again for several years.

Between 2011 and 2016 I would see Tate now and again while photographing on the streets. Our conversations were never long, but he seemed to have been good to his word and settled into a life outside of incarceration.

In the run up to the February 2016 Super Bowl the City had forced the homeless people encamped in the city’s tourist areas to move to less visible areas. Division Street, a long east-west street of small and medium businesses, became the go-to area, and it was on the corner of Harrison and Division Streets that I saw Eddie again. It had been a couple of years since I had seen him and he was living in a large wooden box with four wheels surrounded by an amazing amount of things, tools, bikes, parts and items of indeterminate use at that moment.

Eddie Tate could fix most things. He had tools and parts and was generous with his time and skills. Tate got by working on bikes, and was proud of the possessions he had acquired, including the wide-screen television on which he played video games.

He was prouder still that he had stayed out of jail for four years—no small accomplishment for a homeless man with his rap sheet.

For most of February, I would stop by

to chat. Then, in March, the City moved to clear the Division Street encampments. Tate was one of the last to move, and I lost track of him until October 2016 when we ran into one another, ironically at Division St and Harrison. Without being specific he told me things were looking up. He had just scored some new cloths: a few pairs of pants, a shirt and underwear. I gave him a couple of pair of socks and asked where he was living. He said that a number of people were living over by the cut price food outlet about 5 blocks away on 14th and Shotwell. I told him I’d come visit. Somehow I never did.

By December 20th when I read of the murder of Eddie Tate and his partner, he had moved at least once more to 16th Street and Shotwell were they were shot to death at around 8:45 pm on the 19th of December 2016. Eddie Tate was 51 years old. Lindsay McCollum was 27.

Looking through the images of Eddie on the street, I am reminded that he once told me, “I get along with everybody. I’m hyperactive so I’m always a worker somewhere.” As of now, no motive or suspects have been arrested.

They are hardly unique in their deaths of the homeless on San Francisco streets but I “knew” Eddie Tate a little and will miss him just as those that knew Lindsay McCollum will miss her. ■



PHOTO BY ROBERT GUMPERT.

A slightly built man with only a trace of an accent, he told me of his life growing up in rural Tennessee: “I was one of them

code for a “danger to self or others) tattoo on his shoulders: “... so my part of the 51-50 is the ‘or others.’” But Eddie Tate

## JOURNALISM WORKSHOP

Join us for a free journalism workshop! You’ll learn the fundamentals of journalism, including how to pitch a story, conduct an interview, and write and edit articles. Learn about how you can get involved with journalism or just improve your writing skills. More than ever, we need journalists and writers to document the housing crisis and human rights violations that unhoused San Franciscans face.

No experience necessary. Lunch will be provided.

**SAT, FEBRUARY 11**  
**11AM-1PM**  
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**SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
**OR TO RSVP:**  
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**SLEW@COHSF.ORG**  
**(415) 346-3740**

## SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR - FEBRUARY 2017

This is a calendar of free events concerning poverty, homelessness, and social justice in San Francisco and the wider Bay Area. If you would like your event included in the next issue, please send information to:

### 12 SUNDAY

**SALSA SUNDAY WITH THE COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS**  
3pm - 8pm  
El Rio  
3158 Mission St.  
San Francisco

Join us for Salsa Sunday, the longest running live salsa dance party in SF! Bring your dancing shoes and get ready to indulge in some of the best Salsa, Merengue and Cumbia bands from the bay area!

3p door / \$8 before 4p and \$10 after; Bands play from 4-8p.

Proceeds benefit the Coalition.

### 14 TUESDAY

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH ACTION**  
11am  
Coalition on Homelessness  
468 Turk St.  
San Francisco

Meet at the Coalition for free lunch! Then march together to City Hall to protest the planned city budget costs and the disparate effect they will have on the African American homeless community. **HOMELESSNESS IS NOT JUST A POVERTY ISSUE – IT’S A RACE ISSUE!**

### 18 SATURDAY

**FILM SCREENING: DOGTOWN REDEMPTION**  
6pm - 9pm  
Alley Cat Books  
3036 24th St.  
San Francisco

Join the Coalition on Homelessness and the Street Sheet for a screening of a film that tells the story of homeless people in struggle for survival. We will also be joined by Amir Soltani, one of the filmmakers, who will talk about the film. Donations support the work we do!

### 24 FRIDAY

**COMMUNITY READING GROUP**  
7:30pm - 9pm  
Green Apple Books  
1231 9th Ave  
San Francisco

Writers and readers will be examining books centered around social justice and activism. It will serve as a safe space for the public to read, write, speak, learn, exchange art, offer each other support, and prepare for action. Our book for February is **WHAT WE DO NOW** edited by Dennis Johnson and Valerie Merians.





YOUTH SPIRIT ARTWORKS

# BERKELEY QUAKERS RALLY TO SAVE STREET SPIRIT NEWSPAPER

MAX MILLARD

In 1995, a monthly newspaper, *Street Spirit*, was launched in Oakland to serve the needs of homeless people in the East Bay. Sold on the street by homeless vendors who were allowed to keep all money earned, the paper was funded by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), which paid for office space, printing costs, and the salaries of an editor and vendor coordinator.

The newspaper received strong public support and widespread media praise for its hard-hitting articles and professional design. But in June 2016, the AFSC announced that it would cease funding *Street Spirit* as of December 31, 2016.

Eisha Mason, Associate Regional Director for the AFSC’s West Region, explained: “Due to a reduction in funding, AFSC is laying down three programs this year, including Project HOPE, which publishes *Street Spirit*. The decision to end a program is always very painful for us, since the communities we work with experience extreme injustice, and this is certainly true of *Street Spirit*.”

“The news came as a complete shock to all of us, especially since *Street Spirit* had just completed our most successful year ever,” said Terry Messman, the newspaper’s editor since the beginning. “I was stunned to realize that more than 100 disabled, elderly and homeless vendors would lose their livelihood. And all the dozens of writers who have done such dedicated work for would be silenced, and all the activist groups we stand in solidarity with would lose their major media outlet.”

The AFSC agreed to let the paper continue publication if it could keep itself afloat. In September, the Quaker-based Youth Spirit Artworks (YSA) in Berkeley invited *Street Spirit* to become part of its organization. The offer was accepted.

Sally Hindman, executive director of YSA and a member of Berkeley’s Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting, said in a telephone interview that YSA has already raised \$27,000 for the coming fiscal year, and that the AFSC made a grant to pay Terry Messman’s salary until July.

“Over a dozen people have already come forward with significant gifts,” said Hindman. “We’re developing a whole base of donors for *Street Spirit*. We are submitting a number of grant proposals and doing more fund-raising too,” In addition, the vendors are asked to contribute 5 cents for each issue sold, which raises hundreds of dollars each month.

“Youths from Youth Spirit Artworks got involved in the decisionmaking,” said Hindman. “Around 25 people came to the meeting. There was a real sense that Youth Spirit Artworks wanted to do it, and felt called to do it, so we’re all extremely excited and revved up about it.”

While *Street Spirit* has a long way to go before it can match the amount of funding it formerly received from the AFSC, Hindman has plans for expanding the newspaper’s coverage of homeless children.

“We’re going to have a homeless youth group that will be generating materials for *Street Spirit* starting in January,” she continued, “and there are some interesting possibilities of deep linkages with Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting. Our whole foundation of the organization at Youth Spirit Artworks is Quaker, and there’s huge support from the meeting in our ministry.”

Added Eisha Mason: “We did our best to be responsible by setting a date for ending the program that was six months out, with the hope that the local community would be able to support the newspaper. This does seem to be taking place, and we anticipate *Street Spirit* will be able to continue, which we are very grateful for, as it is such a valuable community resource. For 22 years the paper has provided income for homeless people, given a platform to activists and artists to change public perceptions of homeless people, and broken stories around homeless issues others weren’t covering. We are proud of this work and hope to see *Street Spirit* continue for years to come.” ■

*Max Millard is an after-school enrichment teacher at San Francisco Friends School. He is a former associate editor of Street Sheet.*

# VENDOR PROFILE: BILLY DAVIS

HAYLEY KAY

Billy Davis has deep roots in San Francisco and the Bay Area. His family lived in the Bayview district on Third Street where his mother’s father was a shipyard worker until they moved over to Palo Alto in 1956, which is where Billy would grow up. Billy has fond memories of Potrero Hill, where he and his family would often spend weekends. He describes San Francisco as a kind of home base and decided to move here permanently from Palo Alto as an adult. Billy is 44 years old and has seen first-hand how much the city’s changed. He explained not only how much he has seen it change, but also how fast it’s changed. He recalls feeling as though it changed overnight. This sensation of lost time could be attributed to the battle Billy had with drugs and alcohol after arriving in the city. He describes drugs and alcohol as his two arch nemeses that would often defeat him, no matter how hard he tried to fight them. He eventually became homeless.

Billy was in and out of shelters as well as psychiatric facilities over the years. He couldn’t seem to find himself in a permanent or semi-permanent dwelling of his own. After living in so many shared spaces for so long, dealing with the various hardships attached, his way of thinking was transformed and he realized that he needed to try and get his own place. His goal was to find himself an SRO (Single Room Occupancy), which he currently has. He describes the feeling of independence it has given him as long as he is able to come up with the rent. He is indeed able to right now, due to the disability compensation he has been receiving since 1987 after a serious car accident that left him with warped eyesight. He has to wear thick lenses in his glasses in order to see. However, his warped eyesight doesn’t stop him from getting out and selling the *Street Sheet*.

“The *Street Sheet* is something that motivates me. It keeps me busy and I’m happy with it. I get to meet people. I get rejected sometimes but I find that it levels out. You get good and bad. People are people. Sometimes people don’t like to be talked to that’s why you have to approach with caution and say ‘Hey, can I talk to you about the *Street Sheet*?’ Some people say they don’t want to be bothered, get lost. I hear all these rejections but I take it in stride.”

Billy hasn’t chosen one specific place to sell the *Street Sheet*. He tends to move around, so as not to compete with street performers and musicians. He stays somewhere for a short period of time and then moves on. He sells the paper all over the city, sometimes selling 75 copies in a day. He sells them for \$2 each, but gets bigger donations often times after a stranger stops to have a conversation with him. He finds that people do care about the cause more often than not and it’s something he really appreciates.

When asked him if he planned on staying with the *Street Sheet*, he said, “I will continue working for the *Street Sheet* with the Lord’s willing as long as I stay in good health.” ■

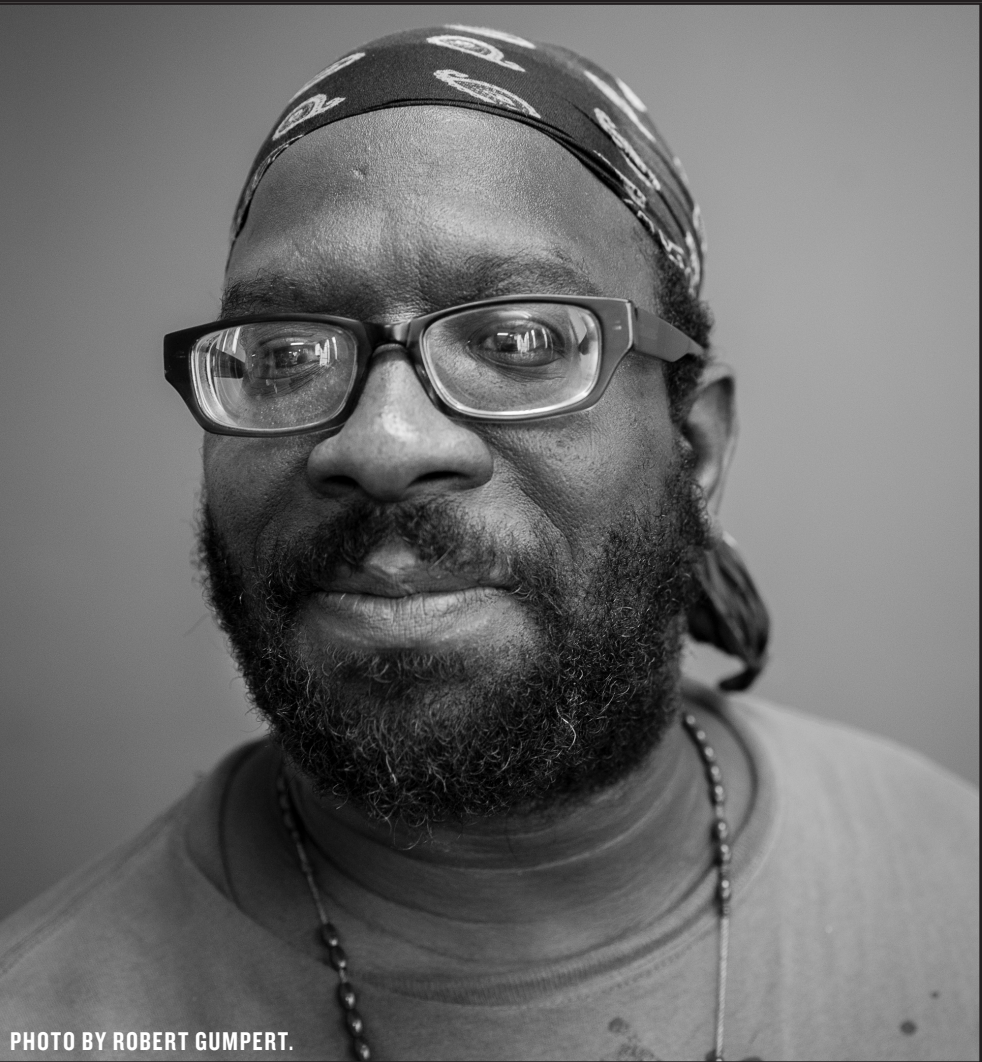


PHOTO BY ROBERT GUMPERT.



Jim Baller 12/31/2016 Twitter: @jimballer



# THE VIEW FROM THE STREET



A little splash of color on a drab sidewalk, The Sunset, San Francisco

Helping us to reflect on the daily life of our streets, photographers offer one picture that represents their personal take on urban life.

**About the artist:** A few years ago, Jaya Bhat decided to document the city of San Francisco for his two children. His idea was to keep a visual record of the place they were growing up in, which will no doubt change in so many ways by the time they will be old enough to get nostalgic. Starting in his neighborhood, with the stores, restaurants, and other favorite places they called home, as the project continued, his horizons slowly broadened. Today, always a camera in hand, the eyes wide open, he realizes how much he loves photography.

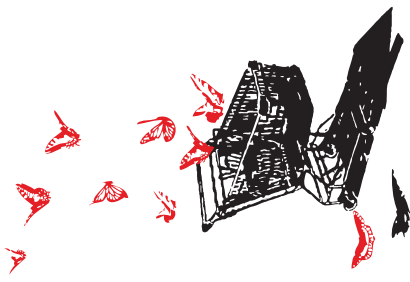
**About the photo:** It amazes me that in places that I have seen a thousand times before, I find details that make me realize that I have never really seen them at all. Those color spots can symbolize the little usual but magnificents actions that each of us do every day. ■

PHOTO: JAYA BHAT WWW.WHATJAYASEES.COM

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